

VZCZCXRO1735  
PP RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHMO #0861/01 2701116  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 271116Z SEP 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3055  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 010861

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/18/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: RUSSIA'S "DEMOCRATS" IN DISARRAY  
  
REF: MOSCOW 10620

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns: 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Russia's "democrats" remain in near-terminal disarray. Personality disputes, disagreements over accommodating with the Kremlin, differences over the viability of political activity, and difficulties in political party registration undercut efforts aimed at uniting in advance of the 2007 Duma elections. While some believe the Kremlin wants a unified democratic (or "rightist") opposition, if only for appearances sake, the democrats remain stymied by Yabloko chairman Yavlinskiy's insistence on a paramount leadership role. In meetings with the Central Election Commission and other senior government officials, the Ambassador will continue to underscore concern over the failure of the Russian Republican Party under Vladimir Ryzhkov to be registered to date; separately, the democrats will need to make tough decisions about their political future. End Summary

¶2. (C) In recent introductory calls on Yabloko's Grigori Yavlinskiy and Republican Party's Vladimir Ryzhkov, a picture of disorganization, backbiting, and alleged pandering to the Kremlin emerged, further complicating the prospects of a unified democratic opposition capable of crossing the seven percent threshold to the Duma.

-----  
"Democrats" divided  
-----

¶3. (C) The real issue, according to Ryzhkov, is that there are three camps within the democratic opposition: those who despise Putin and "argue for war crimes tribunals" (Committee 2008's Kasparov, former Prime Minister Kasyanov), who have scant public traction; those who are prepared to seek some degree of accommodation with the Kremlin (SPS' Belykh and Yabloko's Yavlinskiy) and in return allegedly receive party registration, under the table support, some access to the media, and occasional meetings with Presidential Administration Deputy Head Vladislav Surkov; and those, like Ryzhkov, who oppose Putin, but continue to play within a "managed" system and are denied party registration, as well as access to the media and Kremlin leadership. While Belykh doubted whether a union of rightist parties would cross the seven percent Duma threshold, Ryzhkov optimistically argued that they could garner between 10-15 percent of a general vote. However, Ryzhkov stressed that personality and attitude towards the Kremlin are significant hurdles to the otherwise rational calculus to unite.

¶4. (C) First and foremost, Ryzhkov, Belykh and SPS Chubays all agreed, Yavlinskiy is a pill, and his leadership of a combined democratic opposition would be a bitter one for many to swallow, given his insistence that all other parties subordinate themselves to Yabloko and admit to the policy errors of their past. Yavlinskiy himself told us that the

other democratic opposition "will all come to me, they have no other option," given the amendments to the electoral law that encourage the consolidation of political parties. In his meeting with us, Ryzhkov accused Yavlinskiy of promising to "deliver" a united rightist opposition to Surkov, thereby rounding out the political spectrum. Yavlinskiy dismissed Ryzhkov as "a nothing," while insisting that if he had access to the media, Yabloko alone would draw 15 percent. Political consultant Dmitri Oreshkin told us that it's "psychological" -- Yavlinskiy does not want to come into the Duma as part of a rightist union, but as the undisputed leader of the "democratic" forces. When Duma member and Party of Entrepreneurs representative Oksana Alekseyeva was asked what was the main obstacle to a coalition of Russia's traditionally democratic parties, she said without hesitation: "Yavlinskiy."

15. (C) Second, tactics among democratic parties diverge. The Other Russia conference organized in advance of the G8 summit clarified the divisions: Yabloko and SPS rejected the conference outright -- Yavlinskiy declined to be one of a crowd, and Belykh said that he didn't like the company that the conference organizers were prepared to keep in order to show that opposition to Putin's Russia was alive and well. Outside observers, including Oreshkin, Indem President Georgiy Satarov and Ekho Moskvyy chief editor Aleksey Vennediktov, endorsed the line that both parties chose to continue their tacit understanding with the authorities, according to which the Kremlin tolerates their fundraising and views them as politicians with whom they are prepared to do business. As evidence of this tacit accord some point to Surkov's invitation of both Belykh and Yavlinskiy to a public roundtable debate on his conception of "sovereign democracy." (In the case of SPS, Oreshkin argued that an additional

MOSCOW 00010861 002 OF 002

factor dictating compromise with the Kremlin was Chubays' focus on securing Administration support for the reform of RAO UES.) While Ryzhkov endorsed the Other Russia conference, he subsequently repudiated Kasyanov's efforts to transform the conference into a party that would further Kasyanov's presidential bid. The Republican Party will no longer attend Other Russia functions.

16. (C) Finally, there are disagreements over the political landscape and room for maneuver in the presidential elections. Yavlinskiy was dismissive of electoral politics -- predicting that Putin's inner circle would prevail upon him to remain in power for a third term; indifferent to the unification of leftist parties -- characterizing it a Kremlin project doomed to fail; and fatalistic about his role -- arguing that he was waiting "for the fall" of Russia and devoting his time to preparing the next generation of intellectual elite. In contrast, Ryzhkov reiterated that he was prepared to play in the system and was actively working to establish credible party chapters, despite continuing difficulties with the election commission authorities, including the party's removal from the electoral list in Chechnya. Ryzhkov believed that there was still political room for maneuver, and heralded the unification of leftist parties as a "positive development" since it weakened the hold of United Russia.

-----  
Ryzhkov's Moral Dilemma  
-----

17. (C) Ryzhkov acknowledged that unless he compromised with the Kremlin along the lines of Yabloko and SPS, there was little prospect of success for his party, which remains unregistered, and his political future. While he accepted this intellectually, he noted that morally it continued to cause him pause. Ryzhkov reiterated his rejection of the political stance of Kasyanov and Kasparov, stating that it was important to recognize Russia's political realities, and gave us the impression that he was leaning toward compromise

with Yabloko and SPS. Ryzhkov requested US assistance in underscoring concern over the difficulties faced by the Russian Republican Party in securing its registration. While the CEC has until the end of the year to complete its review of the Republican Party, Ryzhkov predicted that the party's application would be rejected, following a series of "technicalities" that have plagued his party's efforts to organize over the last year.

-----  
Comment  
-----

18. (C) As the rightist parties continue negotiations, many observers believe that the Kremlin also seeks a union of democratic parties, if only to round out the political spectrum and provide legitimacy to the electoral process. Efforts by Republican Party and Yabloko regional leaders in Astrakhan (septel) to unite are indicative of pressures within both party structures to create viable political alliances, and last year's agreement between SPS and Yabloko to join forces secured the democrats a presence in the Moscow Duma. The Ambassador will continue to raise the status of the Russian Republican Party in meetings with the Central Election Commission and senior government officials.  
BURNS